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12-14-2020

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Are You a Late Lateef? Beating the Habit of Just Trying to Meet the Drop-Dead Deadline!



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A Review of Sapadin, L (2020). *Overcoming your procrastination. Advice for 6 personality styles!* Psych Wisdom Publishing. WWW.PsychWisdom.Com, 2020, \$9.99 (Paperback); \$3.99 Kindle Edition, free on Kindle Unlimited, 150 pages. College Student Edition!

You might wonder why “Late Lateef” is included in the title—well, that is how my hometown people in India jokingly refer to procrastinators. (BTW Lateef is a popular name like Tom, Dick, and Harry in my hometown.) When I saw the book cover stating: “College Student Edition!,” I thought I should have a student review this book, but when I read “more than 50% of students who start a degree program don’t complete it” (p. 7), I thought, if I do find a student, the probability is .50 or higher, the student might not complete it after agreeing to write; therefore, I decided to write the review myself! Of course, there are better reasons for me to have reviewed this book. As a professor, I have encountered more than my share of students who simply do not get things done for one reason or another. I recall one student who came back after (too) many years to complete his Master’s thesis—fortunately, I (not he) found the data he had gathered on a diskette that I had saved because of my hoarding impulse. (In this case, my tendency to procrastinate discarding the so-called tech junk saved a student from gathering data again! Hmmm, can procrastination help sometimes?) Anyway, I thought, reading this book can help me recommend some of the strategies to a procrastinating student or better still, have the student read the book. Also, I am as likely to sit on my “but(ts)” (pun intended) as anybody else—and I could benefit from the book. According to the book’s author, “buts” are excuses that justify procrastinating something (p. 10); one of the best “buts” I’ve heard is “life got in my way.”

Many articles and books exist on the topic of procrastination; abundant advice can also be found on the internet. A Google search using the keyword “procrastination” gave me 48,400,000 results (9/14/2020). So why do we need another book? This book is written with college students in mind as its prime audience, and it can be very helpful to them during the current COVID-19 crisis because they are forced to study and work on their own from home.

Learning from her years of counseling and coaching experience, the book's author makes the case that there are individual differences in reasons for habitual procrastination and that such differences are a function of personality styles. As you read the book, you realize that procrastination is not merely a time management problem as ordinarily stressed. She tailors her advice in separate chapters to students with six personality styles. One would think that, for any author, it would be a real challenge to come up with different sets of procrastination-solving strategies for the six personality styles—after all, how many different things can one suggest to get people off their butt to complete their work? This is where you appreciate the author's years of experience which she distills into identifying relatively unique strategies for different personality styles. To the author's credit, the various styles are not presented as disorders or as always to have a negative impact on the person; she also discusses their strengths.

The book has 10 short chapters. Chapter 1 *How to Outsmart Your Procrastination* builds the groundwork—asks you to answer some T/F questions to determine the extent of your “*I’ll do it later*” tendency (p. 5), defines procrastination as an approach-avoidance conflict (“*to do or not to do*”, p. 5), asks you to get your “butt” on the right track; one way of doing that is to discover your “buts,” avoiding negativity, and identifies possible reasons why one may put things off. Chapter 2 asks you to answer six short questionnaires (1-3 rating scale) to identify your personality style (do notice all the “Buts” in parenthesis!): Perfectionist (“*But it’s got to be perfect*”), Dreamer (“*But I hate doing those dismal details*”), Worrier (“*But what if I make a wrong choice*”), Crisis-Maker (“*But I can’t get motivated ‘til the last minute*”), Defier (“*But why should I do it*”), and Pleaser (“*But I have trouble saying ‘no’ to others*”) (pp. 22- 23). The six questionnaires are intended to make readers aware of their predominant personality style by rank-ordering their total scores. It is good that she does not include any cut scores to categorize readers; thus she avoids the inference that the six styles are mutually exclusive, a type of all-or-none thinking.

Chapter 3 stresses that change is a process, requires patience and a commitment to make the effort to implement changes. The author offers the option of only reading the chapter relevant to the reader's dominant personality style or to read chapters about other styles also, but she suggests reading other chapters because they include “a whole lot of goodies for *all* personality styles” (p. 28, italics in original). Chapters 4 through 9 takes the readers through an explanation of each style's typical ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that potentially serve as barriers to getting things done. These chapters require the readers to examine their reasons for procrastination based on their personality styles' and suggest ways to change their thinking, make behavioral plans to get their “butt” moving, and become action-oriented to, in fact, moving their “butts.” Chapter 10 is Wrap-up.

If you have bought this book, you deserve to be congratulated; you have shown awareness of your tendency to put off completing tasks—a tendency you share with a large number of humans everywhere. Even if you are not a “drop-dead deadline person,” you can benefit from this book. Do not put this book aside for later reading! And, do not just read it to get a general hang of various strategies (as I often do!), but work through the exercises to get maximum benefit.

Written with a creative and compassionate flair (you get the feeling that the author understands you, even though she has never met you), this book is fun to read despite the seriousness of the issue addressed. It is written in an upbeat positive conversational tone with attractive, often humorous, headings and subheadings, and sprinkled with a generous supply of motivational quotes (e.g., “procrastination is like a credit card. It's a lot of fun until you get the bill” by Christopher Parker, as cited on p. 68). There are many illustrative examples of everyday procrastination and their underlying thinking and behaviors. The author's intention is not to turn students into “no fun study nerd(s)” (p.2). She states that she understands that “college years are definitely the time to have fun and sow your wild oats. Indeed, if you're straight and narrow now when you're young, when are you going to have a wild and crazy time” (p. 2). Well, I must object to this statement—even at my age (I am not revealing how old I am), I should feel entitled to have some (yes, just some) wild and crazy time, although I am not sure about sowing wild oats! But, maybe I will think about doing so at a later time!